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INSIDE: PEOPLE — COMICS

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RADIO & TELEVISION
By Joan Irwin

Met, Lincoln Center want their share of pie

If you watched the Metropolitan Opera's glorious new production of Rigoletto on PBS the night before last you may have been surprised to see that it was used as a vehicle for fund-raising. You may also have wondered why the 'Live from Lincoln Center' title has been dropped.

Regular viewers of Vermont ETV have become resigned to the frequent appearances of Jack Barry with his pleas for money, but there's a story behind the fund-raising in the Met telecasts and the currently thorny relationship between PBS and Lincoln Center.

It seems that both the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and the Metropolitan Opera have asked for a share of the money raised by the public TV stations during broadcasts involving their productions. More than $1 million was raised for PBS stations through last season's telecast of the Met's 'La Boheme', and the two organizations responsible for the production want a slice of the pie.

The Met has been operating in a state of fiscal crisis for some years, as anyone who listens to the weekly radio broadcasts during the winter knows full well. Lincoln Center is an financial trouble too — the Vivian Beaumont Theatre is closed and both the Center-based New York City Opera and New York City Ballet are just barely surviving.

Charter terms

It was Lincoln Center, after all, which created the live TV series in the first place, having developed new lighting, sound and camera techniques to permit the telecasting of live opera and ballet without distorting the production for the audience in the theatre.

After the financial success — for PBS — of 'La Boheme' the Center took its case to WNET13, the flagship PBS station in New York, asking for participation in fund-raising during events telecast from its theatres. But WNET's non-commercial TV-charter forbids the raising of money for any outside organization. When negotiations broke down WNET suspended fund-raising during Lincoln Center telecasts.

The splendid concept of live opera and ballet telecasts was seriously threatened, but the Metropolitan Opera was mollified with a $50,000 contribution to its production costs gathered from a group of PBS stations. That was enough to allow the stations five minutes of fund-raising during each intermission on Monday night.

Won't settle

However, Lincoln Center is apparently not willing to settle for a similar arrangement and at last report was still demanding the right to a share of the public contributions raised during telecasts from its theatres.

The tone of the discussion so far is said to be conciliatory since neither side wants to jeopardize the relationship. But Lincoln Center feels that it is at least as entitled to a share of the public funds as PBS is, and WNET is waiting for clarification of the terms of the PBS charter as it affects fund-raising for non-PBS causes.

There, for the moment, the matter rests. We'll all have to hope that the problems are resolved without disrupting plans for the telecasts of Don Giovanni in March and the 'Cavalleria Rusticana' 'Pagliacci' double bill in April.

It's a large leap from grand opera to the mob, but there seems to be a good deal of confusion about CTV's 'Godfather' prospect and the nine-hour blockbuster on the same subject coming up on NBC.

CTV will telecast the films as they were seen in theatres — 'Godfather I' tonight from 9 to 11 p.m. and Saturday from 8 to 10 p.m., and 'Godfather II' on Wed. Nov. 16 from 9 to 11 p.m. and Sunday the 20th from 8 to 10:30 p.m.

The NBC saga is drawn from the 1972 and 1974 movies and also includes original footage never before shown. It will be seen on four consecutive nights between Nov. 12 and 15.

CBC radio's 'Special Occasion' presents a recital by the young New York jazz pianist Keith Jarrett this week, tomorrow at 9:04 p.m. on FM and Sunday at 1:05 p.m. on AM. The recital was recorded during Jarrett's appearance this summer at the Stratford Festival.

Bjorn Ulvaeus (top left), Benny Andersson, Anni-Frid Lyngstad and Agnetha Faltskog, whose first-name initials spell ABBA.

'Drop dead' didn't deter rock writer

EDMONTON — (CP) — Marianne Lindvall wasn't defeated last winter when the Swedish rock group Abba, told her to "drop dead" when she told them of her plans to write a book about them.

The Swedish journalist decided enough material was at her disposal without having to speak to the group directly.

Abba said to be filling the gap left in Europe by the Beatles, has sold 25 million albums since 1974. There were requests for 3.5 million tickets for two recent Abba concerts at Royal Albert Hall in London.

Meanwhile, Lindvall's husband, Randy Morse, who initiated the book idea, was in Canada managing Hurtig Publishers Ltd. and trying to make the book a viable project.

Not only did Abba — The Ultimate Pop Group become viable, but it finally won authorization from the group, which had been steering clear of all press since completing a world tour.

Traditionally, books on any given rock group emerge from large American publishing houses, often anonymously or by a rock culture insider.

In Canada, where 10,000 copies is considered a big first run, a first run of 100,000 copies — with rights sold overseas — is an accomplishment, not only in Hurtig's terms but in terms of the entire Canadian publishing industry. Hurtig also did the printing for overseas distribution.

By the time Lindvall returned to Canada in July, she had the book — her first — completely written after having started to research it in March.

After her initial rude encounter with Abba, actually meeting and spending time with them proved a pleasant surprise, she said.

Describing Abba members as "nice ordinary people" she admitted she had to change her preconceived theme of a rock group gone glittery and commercial.

After research had been started, Morse approached manager Stig Anderson and said: "We thought you'd like to know we're writing a book about your group and thought you'd like to contribute."

At a subsequent meeting between Morse and Anderson, who had never heard of Edmonton, or Hurtig Publishers, the manager was shown a montage of the book that had been displayed at the a Montreal Book Fair in an attempt to arouse overseas interest.

At the end of the New York meeting Anderson agreed to an authorized book — a tough agreement to reach with a group that works totally out of Sweden with its own record label and recording studio.

Perhaps what will give the book its widest appeal is Lindvall's lack of journalistic, rock-group background. Because of this, the book lacks rock-cult cliches and information of relevance only to rock insiders.

The photography is also rare for a book of its genre.

Abba basically has only one photographer, Barry Levine, whom Morse stumbled upon after seeing one of his prints in a rock magazine.

Canadian and American editions are appearing in advance of a new Abba record album to be released worldwide later this year, pre-Christmas showings of a feature-length Abba film and an international tour ending in North America next summer.

French Beckett is vibrant

By JULIA MASKOULIS
of The Gazette

Productions of Samuel Beckett's plays are usually monochromatic; his characters are depressed; they speak slowly, drawing out each word with suffering and ever-so-important timing.

But the production of three one-act plays by Beckett under the title 'Ca, which opened last night in French at the National Theatre School may cause a rebellion among orthodox Beckett followers.

The production of 'Fin de Partie' ('Endgame'), 'Comedie' ('Play'), and 'Pas mot' ('Not'), shows a kinesis that is unnatural to Beckett in its characters who are more angry than depressed. With first-rate visuals, excellent costumes and make-up, superb set, and a background of actors slugging along in meaningless action, the production takes on a kodachrome vibrancy.

The three plays are put on by the third year of the French acting section of NTS who are under the charge of a visiting guest director from France, Jean-Claude Fall.

Fall has taken a great deal of artistic licence in his treatment of the plays. Most of it results in an unusual and exciting evening, though it is very heavy because of its duration — three hours.

Beckett, for the uninitiated, is always a gruelling sit-through, but Fall's changes make the task easier because there are many activities to occupy the eyes.

Unfortunately, some of this activity, and the hyperkinetic speed with which it is carried on, takes away from one of the essential things that Beckett himself strived for. Purity.

One of the ways in which these excellent and otherwise very ambitious productions failed is in the articulation and emphasis which they gave to the words. The language became secondary, words were shouted and eventually became meaningless.

In 1942 Albert Camus wrote in 'The Myth of Sisyphus': 'A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man is a stranger.'

Fall's treatment of the plays made Beckett much less of a stranger, and his universe more understandable. That is good, in some ways. Except that Beckett never wanted it that way.

On at NTS through Saturday.

Jazzman intense; punks have pizazz

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ
of The Gazette

November is turning out to be the most active month of the year for this metropolis' rock'n'pop lovers. The diversity is amazing — from Buddy Rich to Catherine Lara to Weather Report to Styx and beyond.

Last night it was Eddie & the Hot Rods at the Windsor Hotel and John McLaughlin's Shakti at Salle Pratana. Two more unalike acts could not imagined.

First, to the Grand Ballroom of the Windsor. Punk-rock is hitting us like a plague, albeit media-invented, and now it has hit this venerable downtown hotel. Officials were apprehensive — after all, a full bar was at the service of any real punk roughneck who wanted to rip the place apart: kick out the jams, or whatever — but the crowd was not quite as weird as the one which greeted the Ramones and Iggy Pop last month.

A local punkband, The Debutantes, opened the show. The quintet is led by David Henman, formerly of the city's original punk group, The Dudes. The ensemble came on both tough and polished and somehow quite empty. Perhaps it was because the toughness wasn't believable and the polish was superficious, but the Debutantes had trouble coming up with anything sustained except a few classic cliche rock riffs burned between stretches of tedium.

However, time's a wasting, and intermission spurs the intrepid critic to Le Plateau, where John McLaughlin is holding court with his spiritually intense Indian-flavoured jazz.

Ever since he played with the Miles Davis group, McLaughlin — who changed his name to Mahavishnu to satisfy his guru Sri Chinmoy — has been the most influential musician in the fusion between jazz improvisation and rock volume.

McLaughlin is obviously a very thoughtful type; this spectre shows in his playing, and it his both his strength and weakness. At times, he is just a little too intense to be believed; he seems to blitz his way through motifs without developing them to the fullest.

On the other hand, he is a master musician. He is filled with dexterity and group awareness: his harmonies with violinist L. Shankar were remarkable for their sonority and speed. Accompanied by the tabla pats of Zakir Hussain, McLaughlin uses the Indian style as a base upon which he launches on jazz reveries as well as breaking into the occasional lapse into show tune cliches or blues phrases.

Eddie and the Hot Rods were well into their first set when I got back to the Windsor. The sound was loud and clear; the three chandeliers hanging from the ballroomwere almost trembling but not quite. Eddie & the Hot Rods comes on more revival than punk, it's evident they cherish the mid-1960s forms, and they form rendition of such moldies as '96 Tears' and 'Woolly Bully.'

They capture a screaming spirit of deja vu in their own songs, such as the climax of their set, 'The Beginning of the End.' They do a number called 'Do Anything You Want' — a bit hit in native Britain — with this message: 'Tired of doing day jobs, With no thanks for what I do. I'm sure I must be someone. Now I'm gonna find out who.'

Not much different from the run-of-the-mill punk message, but delivered with considerabley more tightness and pizazz.

From Eddie & the Hot Rods to John McLaughlin — the beat goes on.

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